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Town Meeting



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BULLETIN OF AMERICA'S TOWN MEETING OF THE AIR
BROADCAST BY STATIONS OF THE AMERICAN BROADCASTING CO.



Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

Should Congress Pass the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill Now?

Guest Moderator, LEWIS BROWNE

Speakers

LANGDON POST
C. J. HAGGERTY

MILTON J. BROCK
HAL COLLING

(See also page 13)

COMING

—August 10, 1948—

What Should We Do in the Berlin Situation?

—August 17, 1948—

Should College Football Be Subsidized?

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BULLETIN OF AMERICA'S TOWN MEETING OF THE AIR

GEORGE V. DENNY, JR., MODERATOR



AUGUST 3, 1948

VOL. 14, No. 15

Should Congress Pass the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill Now?

Announcer:

Tonight we welcome you to Hollywood, California, where we are broadcasting from its famed Radio City at the corner of Sunset and Vine and with this program we are happy to inaugurate Town Meeting's sponsorship on station KECA by the Sealy Mattress Company, also our sponsor on KGO in San Francisco.

Hollywood—city of success and heartbreak; city of fame and glittering lights—synonymous with the motion picture industry.

Hollywood, a pulsating part of the great Los Angeles industrial and residential areas. Here, as in your city or village, there lies a vital problem in housing, a problem emphasized by the influx of thousands of new residents, a problem created with war and still unsolved. It's of real concern to all of us.

So tonight, Town Meeting focuses its attention on the ques-

tion, should Congress pass the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill now? The members of our panel speak with authority for they are closely identified with the housing problem here in the Los Angeles area and throughout the State and Nation.

Now to preside over our discussion, in the absence of George V. Denny, Jr., is the well-known author and writer, Mr. Lewis Browne. Mr. Browne. (*Applause.*)

Moderator Browne:

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. This is a new role for me on Town Meeting of the Air. I have repeatedly been a disputant on this program but never before a moderator, and I frankly relish the change, much as a chronic receiver of speeding tickets might relish an opportunity to play traffic cop for a change.

A traffic cop, incidentally, is what you need around here for your Town Meeting is originating

tonight on one of the busiest corners in the country, in fact, in the universe. We are here in Radio City, Hollywood, on the corner of Sunset and Vine. Incidentally, too, Town Meeting is most happy to welcome as its new sponsor here, the Sealy Mattress Company.

Now Town Meeting's aim, as you know, is to clarify issues. Tonight we confront one of the gravest and most beclouded issues on the national horizon—the issue of housing. The specific question is, "Should Congress Pass the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill Now?"

This bill has been on the minds, if not on the floor of Congress, ever since 1946. President Truman has given it top priority in his list of demands on this special session of the two Houses.

No one denies that we need more housing. There was a time when a man's home was his castle. Now he's lucky if it's even a telephone booth. Literally millions of young men and women want to know why it is that we were so quick and efficient in providing them with barracks which they didn't even want and why we are so slow in building them the homes they desperately need.

It is claimed that the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill will provide the necessary housing under the stimulus and guidance of the Federal Government. Tonight your Town Meeting brings you four experts to debate the pro and con of this claim.

These experts are Mr. Langdon Post, long associated with the public housing in both New York City and the Pacific Coast, and Mr. C. J. Haggerty, representing the American Federation of Labor. Mr. Post and Mr. Haggerty will speak for the bill and they will be opposed by two gentlemen as notable on the other side of the housing barricade, namely, Mr. Milton J. Brock of Los Angeles representing the National Association of Home Builders and Mr. Hal Colling, representing the City Building Administrators.

We will hear first from Mr. Langdon Post who speaks on this program in Hollywood, not because he was once a motion-picture critic on the old *New York World*, but because he is one of the foremost administrators of public housing projects. Ever since he was a member of the New York State Assembly, he has been active in public housing. He was the first chairman of the New York City Housing Authority, more recently Regional Director for the West Coast Federal Housing Authority and is author of that immensely effective volume on the subject, *The Challenge of Housing*. Mr. Langdon Post. (*Applause.*)

Mr. Post:

I have a feeling that before this evening is over you are going to hear some rather harsh things about bureaucrats. Mr. Browne's

introduction might lead you to think that I am one. I want to say that I look back with no regrets for and much pride in my service with the government, but at this time I am in private enterprise, a home builder, just like one of my opponents this evening, Mr. Brock.

Three years have passed since the war's end. At that time, this Nation faced the most critical housing shortage in its history. Today, it is even more critical.

At that time, it was commonly acknowledged that we were in need of 1,500,000 homes a year for at least ten years. This was an overall figure growing out of neglect due to war and depression.

The production score in these last three years is as follows: 650,000 new homes in 1946; about 850,000 in 1947, and a possibility of slightly more in 1948.

In spite of the fact that we have gone backward instead of forward, these figures would not be bad except for one thing. The houses produced, particularly in 1947 and 1948, did not reach the people most in need. These are the people who cannot afford to pay more than \$40 or \$50 a month to buy a home or \$50 or \$60 a month to rent one.

A breakdown in the production figures show an infinitesimal amount of such homes for sale and even less for rent. Instead of getting better, the situation gets

worse. Costs are rising, not falling.

During these three years, Congress has done less than nothing. Instead of making some effort to control costs and channel production into the low income housing field, it took off all controls and all regulations and threw the solution of the housing problem to the tender mercies of the jungle law of supply and demand at a time when we were faced with all demand and little supply.

The only thing we can be thankful for is that it did maintain a semblance of rent control on existing housing.

During these three years, Senators Taft, Ellender, and Wagner fought desperately to have Congress initiate an over-all national housing program. In 1946, they introduced such a bill in the 79th Congress. In 1947, the same bill was introduced in the 80th Congress. It has passed the Senate and now resides in the Rules Committee of the House of Representatives where it could be released at a moment's notice.

This legislation known as the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill is by far the most comprehensive piece of housing legislation ever introduced in Congress. It contains within it the beginnings of a program for the rebuilding of America and the production of decent homes for all the people of this Nation at prices they can afford to pay.

It recognizes that the problem is primarily one to be solved by private enterprise, and, with this in mind, it provides many forms of assistance to private enterprise both in the investment and speculative fields.

It recognizes that one of the great evils of the Nation today is its slums, and that their eradication cannot be accomplished without direct financial assistance. Therefore, it makes provision for this assistance and creates machinery whereby communities desirous of setting out on a slum clearance program may get direct aid from the Federal Government.

But the authors realized that these slum clearance provisions could not possibly operate successfully unless homes were found for those who lived in the slums to be eliminated, and that this could not be accomplished through the ordinary operations of private enterprise. So they provided for a modest program of 125,000 homes a year for four years, about 8.5 per cent of the need, all to be owned and operated by local government agencies.

This legislation has the widest support of any now pending in Congress. It has been endorsed by all the veterans' organizations, by both labor organizations, militantly by all the church organizations, and literally by every organization representing the consumers of this Nation.

It is opposed by most of the real

estate boards throughout the country, by Mr. Brock's National Home Builders Association, by the Apartment House Owners Association and a few other organizations representing restricted and tightly vested interests.

Until such a program as this is adopted by the Nation as a whole, we shall continue to flounder in a housing shortage which grows worse and worse with each month.

The veterans will seek desperately for a home, the slum dwellers will be condemned to the slums, and the new families as they come along will join the veterans in their desperate search. (*Applause.*)

Moderator Browne:

Thank you, Mr. Post. Now we shall hear from an opponent to the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill, Mr. Milton J. Brock, past president of the 1,800 building contractors in the State of California and now president of the already mentioned National Association of Home Builders. He is himself an active, successful building contractor—has been one for the past thirty years. His firm did expensive wartime construction of housing units and barracks throughout Southern California. Since the war, Mr. Brock has done his private bit to try and reduce the housing shortage by building approximately a thousand homes in this area.

Now, Mr. Brock, what are your objections to the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill? (*Applause.*)

Mr. Brock:

Mr. Post has exposed the objectives of the supporters of public housing when he claims that the Wagner-Ellender-Taft Bill contains within it the beginnings of a program for the rebuilding of America. That is just what this bill will do—rebuild America to conform with the policies and doctrines of socialism.

This fact alone should cause our Congress to deliberate this bill carefully. It should cause our Congressmen to free themselves from the heat and hysteria of pre-election politics. If they do these things, they will never let this bill become a law.

This is a bill that should make America think. It is a bill that should make every American ask himself a few questions.

You are told that this bill will produce low-cost housing. What the proponents of this bill mean is that the bill will produce low-rent public housing owned and operated by a federal agency.

Do you want the Government to begin its program of socialized housing by building 500,000 units where the rent will be nominal because you, as a taxpayer, will defray these rents to the tune of 80 million dollars every year for the next forty years? That is one of the results of this bill, a 40-year plan—an American experiment in European socialism.

Communitistic housing in Russia and socialistic housing in the Brit-

ish Isles differ from this kind of public housing in name only. Do they have anything in these countries that we want?

There is no question about the need of housing, but it is high time that the public knew about the housing that is being produced.

During the early postwar months the building industry of America struggled with the bureaucrats who were trying to stretch their wartime jobs into a peacetime period. We had directives and counter-directives. We had black markets, gray markets, and we had material shortages to a highly critical degree.

The same people who caused this, who contributed so much to the shortage of housing we have today, are the people who have spent the past three years trying to make the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill a law of the land.

Sensibly you might ask, "Will it build houses?" Of course, it will. But if you ask, "Will it build *more* houses," then the answer would be an emphatic "No."

Last year was the building industry's first year of opportunity, the first postwar year free from restrictive controls. We of the industry built 840,000 units last year and this year, 1948, we will keep our pledge to build at least 1,000,000 new units.

To do our jobs, we have used all available building materials. We have utilized every available unit

of skilled building labor. There was none left over.

Had there been enough building materials, had there been enough labor to build 3,000,000 more homes in 1948, believe me, we would have built them.

This Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill means that the Government will exercise its super priorities and shrink the building material stock pile to practically nothing.

It means that if you want to build your own home, if you want to take advantage of the GI Bill, you will have to turn to black markets and pay black market prices for your building materials.

And neither you nor I can do anything about it. Our hands are tied because a government agency wants to go into the housing field. A handful of bureaucrats want to become landlords. Mr. Post knows all about the efforts of bureaucrats to expand their spheres of influence. He was one of them for a long time.

Maybe you own your own home now. Maybe you are one of the taxpayers who will foot the bill for the construction of this half million housing units and dig a little deeper for the next forty years to pay the \$6,400,000,000 in rent subsidies.

If you are, ask yourself this question. "Who will pay for the police and fire protection of these public housing units? Who will pay for the streets, the schools, the sewers?"

The answer is that you will. You who are within range of my voice and millions of other industrious self-respecting citizens—you will find the cost of these services added to your tax bill. It will be there because federal housing units are exempt from local taxes, because they are owned by the Federal Government.

The day comes when you can't afford to take care of your Government any longer, so you go to the other extreme and let the Government take care of you. Not a very pretty picture is it? But that is what it is, no more and no less.

There are other reasons why this bill should not become a law, but I think that these are the most important. If a proposition is not an American proposition, if it seeks to indoctrinate Americans to a kind of thinking and living that has proven fatal to other countries then, as an American, I am opposed to it. (*Applause.*)

Moderator Browne:

Thank you, Mr. Brock. Now we turn once more to a supporter of the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill, a representative of labor, and from what we have just heard, labor is heavily involved in this question. Mr. C. J. Haggerty started out as a building trades mechanic. He led in the successful campaign to unionize the building industry throughout Southern California. As such he became head of the Building Trades Council of Los

Angeles. His success as a labor leader eventually raised him to the position of president of the California State Federation of Labor, an office which he held for 7 years. Since 1943, he has been Executive Secretary of that group.

Mr. Haggerty, as a representative of labor, why do you support the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill? *(Applause.)*

Mr. Haggerty:

Contrary to the statement of Mr. Brock, we believe that federal aid for housing should be passed immediately. This is what the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill proposes. We would take the veterans out of the garages and substandard homes. We must have this type of legislation. Public assistance of some sort is absolutely necessary.

Many state and local governments stand willing to do their share, but their resources are inadequate and in any case, the problem is national.

The charge of socialism is used as a red herring merely to confuse the issue. Most of the housing built today is indirectly supported by government action under the FHA and through the federal home-loan banks. The railroads, the air lines, the shipping industry, and agriculture, all receive subsidies from the government. Still we don't hear this aid, furnished by the Government, being called socialistic. Why, then, shouldn't the government help a

man and his family get a home?

I prefer that private industry do this job. But if private enterprise cannot get the people out of slums or provide decent homes, those in low income groups see no reason why the Government should not assist them.

We must keep in mind that no housing program at all is an expensive affair in terms of poor health, juvenile delinquency, crime, and fire hazards. In San Francisco, it has been found that in good residential districts, the city collected \$500,000 more in taxes than it paid out in police, fire, school, and the like; but in a section of blighted neighborhood of the same size, the city paid out \$400,000 more in such services than it collected in taxes.

We are informed that if the so-called public housing provisions were removed from the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill, Congress would pass the bill immediately. Although this provision is a small part, compared with the other benefits derived from the bill, it nevertheless constitutes the heart and soul of the measure. You cannot clear slums if you don't provide living units for slum dwellers at rents they can afford.

The slum clearance provision is, therefore, dependent upon public housing. This, Senator Taft, has repeated over and over again.

The problem is so big that it requires the same kind of thinking the same intelligence which in-

spired us during the war years.

The problem cannot be solved by private enterprise alone, nor by the Government. It must find a solution in the combination and teamwork of both as the bill provides.

As a matter of fact, this comprehensive housing bill is not a detriment to private enterprise, but an aid. In the use of architects, land appraisers, and land negotiators, the local agencies depend upon private enterprise. In the letting of construction contracts, and under the terms of the Bill, in the issuance of their bonds, they take advantage of free enterprise through their policy of inviting bids. It is only in the ownership and operation of the finished product that government resources are utilized.

It must be remembered that every measure advocated by the Government for the benefit of the great mass of people such as free education, free textbooks, aid of the sick and aged, social security, workmen's compensation, and many others has been termed socialistic or un-American by their opponents.

This argument is no consolation to the 10 million families who are in need of decent homes. Two million of these families are veterans who are at least entitled to a decent shelter in which their families can live as human beings and can receive a start in life, free from crime, free from demor-

alization of character resulting from living in slum areas.

The charge that the bill is inflationary is without foundation and cannot be taken seriously. The bill contains price limitations on the type of house which can receive support. It limits the price increases and it aids the lowest income group to obtain housing.

Time will not permit the discussion of this feature but I believe it is important to stress this fact: The present price of the average home and lot amounts to \$11,000. Three-quarters of our families must pay such a price. Forty-seven and four-tenths per cent of all families in this country lived in rented houses in 1947, but only 15 per cent of all the new units built have been for rental purposes, and the rent of even those few units are beyond the reach of most people.

Set aside, if you will, the obligation which we owe to the veterans; ignore at this time, the inhumanity of compelling people to live still longer in the slums of this nation, but let us merely consider the effects of our refusing to continue to accept responsibility toward the housing of our people which was started in 1930. It will be nothing short of catastrophe if we permit this crisis to deepen and broaden.

There is only one answer. Congress should pass the Taft-Elender-Wagner Bill now. (*Applause*).

Moderator Browne:

Thank you, Mr. Haggerty. Now for our fourth speaker, we turn to a representative of the city building officials, Mr. Hal Colling. Mr. Colling comes to us as the managing director of the Pacific Coast Building Officials' Conference that group of city officials whose job it is to initiate and administer the local building codes.

In that capacity, Mr. Colling, you stand for local public regulation over private enterprise in the building industry, and we, therefore, are all the more interested to know why you object to the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill. Mr. Colling. (*Applause.*)

Mr. Colling:

I will agree with Mr. Post that the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill is by far the most comprehensive piece of housing legislation ever introduced into Congress, and I will agree with Mr. Haggerty that the housing problem is so big that it is impossible of solution without the concentrated efforts of all of us.

My objection to the present Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill in its present omnibus form is that it is socialistic in concept, despotic in the power it gives one bureau head, and overlapping in its administration as applied in urban areas.

States and cities do not want federal control over their local functions except as necessary dur-

ing a war. The proposed housing bill gives this control in peacetime.

Far from being speeded up, the industry will be hindered and delayed by such regulation over the local level. Remote control can result only in confusion and unnecessary costs when superimposed upon local legislation.

The specific clauses to which building officials object are Section 301, which gives the housing administrator the power to set up laws for local administration; Section 501 puts a stout club in his hand by giving him power to decide to what extent financial assistance to cities is to be rendered.

These two clauses alone give despotic power to the proposed housing administrator over city departments and the building industry, and make him a czar over that industry.

Do we want a czar over the automobile industry, the farmer, the clothing manufacturer, and so on down the line? Or do we want to continue our system of free enterprise?

There is nothing wrong with the building industry today that is not also wrong and out of adjustment in practically every other industry in the United States and in the country in general—the inevitable aftermath of war. The building industry has responded nobly to the crushing demands which have been placed upon it

for construction during and since the war.

The law of supply and demand has not been repealed, and rising costs are due partially to the tremendous demand for houses and to the high cost of labor and make-work tactics, whether in the site or in the mine, mill, or factory, and don't forget this—to the high cost of government.

Take an ordinary six-room house and let us make a comparison of costs. In 1939, it was \$5,000. In 1946, it was \$10,000. According to the *Congressional Record*, labor costs for this average house have increased from 56 per cent of the total in 1939 to 68 per cent of the total in 1946—an increase of \$2,800 in 1939 to \$6,800 in 1946 for labor costs.

Federal income taxes in 1939 took \$1 out of every \$14 of national income. In 1946, it took \$1 out of every \$4.

Now my third point is this. I believe that our slums must be cleared, that our people must be decently housed, but it cannot and should not be done through a politically inspired housing bill that gives more control to federal bureaus than any bill since the War Powers Act.

It must be done by passing this control down to states and cities. Federal moneys can and should be spent on local projects, but control of those local projects should remain with the cities themselves.

Federal public housing legisla-

tion has been made a political football by members of both political parties. For the sake of party prestige, it has been made a federal issue.

I say to the Senators and Representatives in Washington: Draft a simple bill stating the broad ends to be achieved, implement the plan with federal funds and give the states and cities an opportunity to clear their own slums and raise the standard of living within their own boundaries. (*Applause.*)

Moderator Browne:

Thank you, Mr. Colling. Now Mr. Colling, and all four of you gentlemen, if you'll just gather around me for a moment at the microphone, here's your chance you've been waiting for to ask each other pointed questions. Mr. Post, it's been some time since you spoke. Will you ask the first question?

Mr. Post: I'd like to ask Mr. Brock this: Twice he's stated that these projects under the Wagner Ellender-Taft Bill would be federally government owned. Doesn't he know that they are going to be locally owned and locally operated and not federally owned and operated?

Mr. Brock: Well, as a matter of fact, you'll find that all public housing projects in the United States are financed completely by the Federal Government, with the exception of those programs that

are financed by the state. The one we're talking about—this particular TEW Bill, is a completely federal project, even though it is managed and supervised by local associations.

Mr. Browne: Mr. Haggerty, have you any comments or questions you would like to ask specifically?

Mr. Haggerty: Well, that question wasn't answered to my satisfaction, because I understood that the Federal Government always asked the local bodies to set up authorities for the purpose of obtaining these funds and then administering whatever buildings were erected.

I'd like to ask this question, however. I wonder if Mr. Brock has a solution to the problem of getting homes for the low-income workers instead of the Taft-Elder-Wagner Bill?

Mr. Browne: Mr. Brock, you've been called on again. Would you answer that?

Mr. Brock: There is housing being produced in the United States for the low-income groups, let us say, in all brackets. In the past year, in the 840,000 units that were built, 85 per cent of the houses built were in that bracket that could be supported by men who were making from \$1,000 to \$5,000 a year. (*Shouts.*)

Mr. Browne: Have you any information on that subject, Mr. Colling, or a question you'd like to ask?

Mr. Colling: No, I don't think so.

Mr. Browne: Well, then, Mr. Post, would you like to comment on that statement?

Mr. Post: Yes. One to five is a long, large bracket. How many from, let's say, \$1,000 to \$3,000, Mr. Brock?

Mr. Browne: Mr. Brock, could you answer that?

Mr. Brock: Well, seems like I'm going to have to answer all the questions here tonight. Well, I

THE SPEAKERS' COLUMN

LANGDON POST—A former chairman of the New York Housing Authority, Mr. Post was wartime regional director for Western Housing, located at San Francisco.

C. J. HAGGERTY—Mr. Haggerty is Executive Secretary of the California State Federation of Labor.

MILTON J. BROCK—Mr. Brock is president of the National Association of Home Builders.

HAL COLLING—President of the Colling Publishing Company, Mr. Colling is also managing director of the Pacific Coast Building Officials' Conference.

LEWIS BROWNE—Born in London, England, in 1897, Lewis Browne came to the United States in 1912. He is a graduate of the University of Cincinnati and Hebrew Union College. He has also done post-graduate work at Yale University. Mr. Browne served as rabbi of Temple Israel in Waterbury, Connecticut, and of the Free Synagogue in Newark, N.J. He organized the Newark Labor College and engaged in free lance writing. In 1922, he resigned the rabbinate to devote his full time to lecturing and writing. Since then he has lectured at many universities and has written a great many books, many of which are on religious subjects.

would like to suggest to Mr. Haggerty that as far as costs are concerned, I think that he will find—by investigation, I'm sure he knows—that the costs of everything today are twice what they were in 1935-39. Housing is no exception. The automobile, everything that has to do with living costs, clothing, food, and the farm, and meat, as a matter of fact—they're all up from 100 to 125 per cent.

Housing is no exception. As a matter of fact, housing is up less percentagewise than any one of the items I've named. Labor is up 129 per cent. Now these are facts that are produced and substantiated by the Bureau of Labor Standards.

Mr. Haggerty: Well, I'm not quarreling about the fact that everything has risen. Of course, prices are up tremendously in everything. That still doesn't in any way console the ten million people throughout the country who need a home at a rent they can afford to pay, particularly when the Federal Government is willing to subsidize low-cost homes in their benefit.

Now my concern is that we do have a group in the country who are opposed to granting even the minimum type of home to the low-income workers who do not earn in excess of \$3,000 or even up close to three thousand dollars. We have millions in that category, as the records show.

Mr. Browne: Now, Mr. Colling,

would you have some comment to make on that, you representing local authority in this matter rather than federal?

Mr. Colling: I am of the opinion and I am very sound I think on my own thoughts on this, that we do not want a federal-controlled housing project. May I bring to your attention the housing projects that we have had that were put up by the Federal Government during the war.

Vanport was one of them—the second-largest city in Oregon—the city of 50,000 people was put in there by the Federal Government and in opposition to the city officials. If the disaster of Vanport had happened during the war we'd have lost 50,000 people.

There were situations in Richmond, in which we had housing conditions that were put up by the Federal Government during the war. We had fires, we lost people in those fires; they didn't have proper exits.

My feeling is that we should have public housing but it should be done at the local level and not in the Federal Government.

Mr. Browne: Mr. Post, you've been associated with these things on a national as well as a city level. Is that true?

Mr. Post: Well, I know something about Vanport and something about Richmond. I helped to build both of them.

Mr. Browne: Well, there you are, you're the guilty man.

Mr. Post: And I don't think it is fair to bring in war housing as an example of what would be done under the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill. The war housing was temporary housing, just like the Liberty ships. It was never intended to continue. That is one of the most important reasons of why we should have the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill—so we can get rid of the war housing, which we all admit is not very good and does not constitute good standard living of Americans. (*Applause.*)

Mr. Browne: Mr. Brock, will you comment on that?

Mr. Brock: I would like to clarify just a little more about these figures I quoted a moment ago. The study used—the figures given—were by President Truman's economic report on the percentage of American families in various income brackets. The standard economic rule that a family can afford to buy a house costing 2.5 times its annual income was used.

Now, then, the results show that 86 per cent of the houses built in 1947 could be afforded by people with incomes between \$1,000 and \$5,000, and 20 per cent of all the houses built could be afforded by people with incomes of less than \$2,000.

These are figures that are put into the report by Mr. Truman's own economic committee and not my figures and not the industry's figures. However, 28 per cent of

those who have incomes below \$2,000, less than half, 13 per cent, have incomes of less than \$1,000.

Mr. Browne: Thank you, very much. Now, we'll have to get ready for the questions from the floor. While we get ready for those questions, I'm sure you, the listeners, will be interested in the following message.

Announcer: You are listening to America's Town Meeting of the Air, originating from Radio City in Hollywood through the facilities of Station KECA. We are discussing the question: "Should Congress Pass the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Housing Bill Now?" Our speakers are Langdon Post, C. J. Haggerty, Milton J. Brock, and Hal Colling. In a moment you'll hear questions from our studio audience.

In the meantime, let me remind you that the complete text of tonight's program is published in Town Meeting Bulletin, which you may secure by writing to Town Hall, New York 18, New York, enclosing 10 cents to cover the cost of printing and mailing. Allow at least two weeks for delivery. The Bulletin is \$4.50 a year; \$2.35 for six months; or, if you'd like a trial subscription, enclose \$1 for 11 issues.

With this program, Town Meeting welcomes its new sponsor on KECA, the Sealy Mattress Company. Across the nation Town Meeting is available for local sponsorship on stations affiliated

with the ABC network. Many businessmen, week after week, tell the story of their firms in advertising messages on Town Meeting. Under our plan of local cooperative sponsorship, a bank, an industrial concern, department store, automobile dealer, in fact, nearly

every type of business, can sponsor Town Meeting on its local ABC station at surprisingly low cost. Call your station manager tomorrow for details. Now, for our question period, we return you to our guest moderator, Mr. Lewis Browne.

QUESTIONS, PLEASE!

Mr. Browne: Now, let's see what questions we have from this Hollywood audience. I notice a good percentage of young people scattered throughout the auditorium, but we won't show any partiality, we'll take them from all ages. First, the gentleman in the first row.

Man: I am from here in Hollywood, an ex-G.I. Mr. Post, as a building contractor, do we necessarily have to have these project homes—in other words, for G.I.'s—these groups of homes, built in groups, like cattle grazing on a pasture? That's what I'd like to find out.

Mr. Post: Well, I haven't seen any cattle in the projects but I don't think you do have to have them, and as a matter of fact, under the Wagner-Ellender-Taft Bill the design of the projects is entirely up to the local community and not up to somebody in Washington.

Man: No, but in building these projects—why do they have to be in groups?

Mr. Post: Well, I don't think they do have to be in groups.

Mr. Browne: They don't have to be in groups—that's your answer. *(Laughter.)*

The lady in the fourth row there.

Lady: My question is for Mr. Brock. You say that housing can be supplied without government assistance, but will that be low cost housing, and, if so, what factors will decrease the already exorbitant costs?

Mr. Brock: I have stated before that a major part—there were 850,000 houses built in the year of 1947—that 85 per cent of those houses constructed were available and could be afforded by that income group of \$1,000 to \$5,000.

Mr. Browne: Mr. Haggerty, would you like to comment on that?

Mr. Haggerty: Yes, I'd like to ask anybody in the audience, either physically in presence here or on the radio audience, if you ever tried to buy one of those homes making \$3,000 and ask the bank to

give you a loan to make your down payment? (*Applause.*)

Mr. Browne: Gentleman there. Gentleman in the fourth row there. Yes.

Man: Mr. Haggerty, I'm from East Los Angeles. I'm an assistant to a chemist. In Mr. Brock's and Mr. Colling's introductory speeches they mentioned that the TEW Bill will endorse socialistic housing plans. Do they expect me to think that Robert Taft endorses socialism or are they red-baiting the bill? (*Applause.*)

Mr. Haggerty: The question is a very good question and nobody, I'm sure, would accuse Senator Taft of having any socialistic tendencies or thoughts—least of all myself. Might I make this quotation of Senator Taft's own statement to the Congress: "We have long recognized the principle that persons who cannot pay for medical care should be given a minimum of medical care. We have recognized the principle that persons who cannot pay for education should be given a free education. We have not until within the past ten years recognized a similar obligation with regard to shelter. I very strongly believe we have that obligation now. I believe that if we desire to have reasonable equality of opportunity for the children of this country, they must be allowed to grow up in a situation in which there is at least decent shelter where families can live as human beings." That is a statement

of Robert Taft, I think, which answers your question. (*Applause.*)

Mr. Browne: Thank you, Mr. Haggerty. Mr. Brock?

Mr. Brock: I would like to say this with regard to that socialistic question a while ago. The question was, I believe, is Mr. Taft socialistic?

Certainly I do not believe Mr. Taft is socialistic at all but I do believe this program is socialistic. I think that's very evident on the face of the whole program.

Mr. Zeidler, Mayor of the City of Milwaukee, stated very definitely before the House Banking and Currency Committee what socialism is. It is that part of his doctrine where "government takes over where private enterprise has failed."

Now then, the major part of the witnesses who appeared before Mr. Wolcott's committee on housing, banking, and commerce and finance based their whole argument on the fact that private enterprise has failed. Private enterprise has not failed in that it has produced 840,000 new living units last year and is producing over a million units this year.

Now just one other point I have here. I want to ask Mr. Haggerty a question because he pointed out the fact that nobody can go out and buy a house for \$3,000 or rather with \$3,000 could go into the bank and get it.

Now, Mr. Haggerty, you are the

head of the labor organization in the State of California. I would like to ask you this. You have talked about the high cost of building and since labor and the productivity of labor comprise the majority part of construction cost, I want to ask you if you will do one thing. Will you before the millions of radio listeners pledge yourself to work to the end that construction labor will return to the productivity level that prevailed ten years ago? (*Applause.*) And will you, Mr. Haggerty, go on record opposing the restrictions as to the size of the brush that the painter may use? Will you go on record here in public and oppose any limit of production or make-work practices that will increase cost? If you will do that, the building industry will see to it that you will get houses much cheaper than they are today and I'm sure that will make a big dent in the housing costs. (*Applause.*)

Mr. Browne: Mr. Haggerty, you have been challenged.

Mr. Haggerty: I want to correct the first statement of Mr. Brock. I have not criticized industry for high costs. I've criticized them only because of the impossibility of the industry in being able to house the low-income workers and the low paid people. It's not their fault. It's beyond their powers. But to answer the question specifically—I've forgotten, there are about four-in-one. The labor group in this country will be happy to

go back to normal prices and normal wages. Whenever the industry from the real estate group, the banker, the contractor, and all the other increments go back to normal times we'll go back with them. (*Applause.*)

Mr. Browne: Thank you. The gentleman back there, would you ask a question?

Man: Mr. Colling, I want to direct my question to you. You said you were afraid of despotic and bureaucratic controls if we had the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill. I like to know if you consider the fine housing that the Scandinavian countries have provided their people with the result of despotic and communistic rule?

Mr. Browne: You have been asked about the Swedish housing now. (*Laughter.*)

Mr. Colling: Well, not having been to Sweden, I can't answer that question for you very well. But I do know what federal housing has done to us in the United States during the past years. The slums that we have to get out of our way today were built by the Federal Government.

Mr. Browne: Does anyone here on the platform know about the Swedish housing? Yes, Mr. Post.

Mr. Post: No, I don't know too much about the Swedish housing, but I do take exception to the fact that the slums we have today were built by the Federal Government. I can take Mr. Colling from

the Lower East Side of New York to anything down here in Los Angeles and show him slum after slum which the Federal Government never had anything to do with. I would like Mr. Colling to point out to me any single slum that the Federal Government has built, as far as that is concerned, except possibly for temporary housing. Unless, as I said before, we get some permanent housing to replace the temporary, it may become slum in the years to come. (Applause.)

Mr. Browne: The young lady there. Oh, Mr. Colling, would you like to answer that?

Mr. Colling: I may just qualify my statement just a little that the war housing projects that have been built since 1942 are the slums of today. The Federal Government has put the housing problem into those places.

Mr. Browne: Now the lady there in the back. Yes?

Lady: My question is addressed to Mr. Post. Did I understand you to say that you are a home builder? How does it happen you are on the side of public housing?

Mr. Post: Well, I think perhaps the best answer I can give to that is that I'm not stupid enough to think I can build for the people who the Wagner-Ellender-Taft Bill is trying to reach and I'm not selfish enough to ask them to wait until I can. (Applause.)

Mr. Browne: A question here. A gentleman there. Yes?

Man: My question is for Mr. Brock. My name is Stephen Fry. I'm a journalist from Salinas, California. Would you please explain what you mean by European socialism and why you think it smells bad? (Laughter.)

Mr. Browne: Yes, Mr. Fry who was on the program of Town Meeting of the Air last week asks the question of Mr. Brock.

Mr. Brock: What I mean by socialistic housing in England is this. The government of England has taken over and socialized—and when I say socialized I mean the government has taken it over—they have taken over the housing program 100 per cent.

The present government—the Attlee government—some time ago had it arranged so that private industry could build one out of every four houses. They found that private industry was doing the job and doing it in a magnificent way. They, therefore, reduced the whole thing and they've eliminated private industry completely from building any houses whatsoever and it's completely done by the government.

Every house in England is built by the government now and you have to get a permit from the government in order to build. It's not only taken over the housing program. It's taken over the banks and, I believe, the railroads, and they are going into all phases of various public utilities and things of that nature in England.

That's what I mean by socialism in England.

Mr. Browne: Mr. Haggerty did you want to comment on that?

Mr. Haggerty: I'd like to say that the American Federation of Labor, I think, has been the strongest proponent of free enterprise in this country ever since its inception. We are not for socialistic housing projects or for socialism as such, but it is certainly a sad commentary on this great Nation to let its millions of veterans who gave all they had on the foreign soils go without housing when we can subsidize every other large industry in this country that wants it, but our own people. (*Applause.*)

Mr. Browne: The lady over there. Yes, madam.

Lady: This question is directed to Mr. Post. Mr. Brock tells us the TEW Bill is socialistic. You tell us the bill has wide support. Just who is behind the TEW bill?

Mr. Browne: Mr. Post, while you're studying your book, bring it right up here so you can tell the whole audience all over the country just what the answer is. Are you going to list all the organizations that are back of you?

Mr. Post: I think I have it here—just a moment. I'm just going to list some of the more important ones. The American Association of University Women, the American Federation of Labor, the American Federation of Women's Clubs, the Federal Council of

Churches of Christ in America, the Council for Social Action, the Congregational Christian Churches of the United States.

Mr. Browne: Is that enough?

Mr. Post:—the National Board of Young Women's Christian Association, the National Catholic Welfare Council, the National Conference of Catholic Charities, the National Council of Catholic Men, the National Council of Catholic Women, the National Council of Jewish Women. (*Applause and laughter.*)

Mr. Browne: Thank you. Mr. Brock, have you any organization to add to it that might be a little subversive?

Mr. Brock: No, I have not. But there's a question I would like to ask Mr. Post. He answered me while ago that he was a builder. At the present time he is building houses. We're not dealing in personalities tonight, so I'll not go into that feature of it. However, I was amazed when I heard today that he was a builder. I didn't know that. But here's something I would like to bring to your attention.

Mr. Post made this statement in his book which was mentioned in the introduction this evening: *The Challenge of Housing*. I would like to read from one of the statements he made in the book. No doubt he's familiar with it.

"Danger signals flash from the political implications and oppo-

tunities inherent in a vast public housing program. This last plum is a new brand of political fruit which has enormous possibilities for exploitation. Imagine the golden opportunities latent in a \$500,000,000 housing program in New York City. Commissions, profits, fees, jobs, and finally apartments for at least 200,000 voters. It is a bonanza beyond the wildest dreams of the most opportunist politician. The fear of possible political exploitation is almost the only justified one which I have heard the opponents of public housing express. My four years' experience with the New York City Housing Authority, in which time we built apartments for about 5,000 voters has not served to allay my fears." (*Applause.*)

Mr. Browne: Mr. Post, you have been quoted against yourself—or is it against yourself?

Mr. Post: No, it is not against myself. This is the first time I have had the opportunity to answer that quotation which the National Association of Real Estate Boards has paid me the great tribute of spreading all over the United States. Of course, I made that statement. Whenever you go into any activity in government, there is always the opportunity and chance and danger of political exploitation—in public education, in any other kind of activity—and anybody who writes or talks or speaks or acts in this kind of a

field, must give that warning, or they're not fair to themselves.

Mr. Browne: Thank you, Mr. Post. The gentleman over there.

Man: My question is addressed to Mr. Haggerty. I live in Los Angeles, and I work in the building trade. Are high building wages the cause of high-priced homes, as assumed by your opponents? If not, elaborate on your answer, specifically.

Mr. Haggerty: Well, I'm glad that question was asked, too, because it gives me the chance to challenge Mr. Colling's figures which he quotes as coming from the *Congressional Record*.

If I recall, he said that the on site labor cost was 58 per cent of the total cost of a building. That figure we don't accept. It is erroneous and has no basis of fact.

Our figures, throughout the entire nation, show that in 1939 the on site labor costs for all labor was 29 per cent. Today, it is 33 per cent and possibly going to 34.

Now, let's assume that to be true. Then, if we should make a reduction of 25 per cent in the workers' wages in housing, it would only reduce your total cost of a house 6 per cent.

Mr. Colling: If we take that \$10,000 house—and I'm taking Mr. Haggerty's figures of 34 per cent—there will be labor cost on a \$10,000 house of \$3,400.

Mr. Haggerty: That's right.

Mr. Browne: Just a moment. We're going to go to more ques-

tions here. There's a home-hungry look in the eye of this gentleman in the second row. Will you ask a question?

Man: Thank you, sir. I'd like to direct my question to Mr. Langdon Post. I am a resident of the great state of California and interested very deeply in housing. I would like to ask this question. Is there any conflict between the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill and the California State Housing Initiative Proposition No. 14?

Mr. Post: There is no conflict whatsoever. As a matter of fact, the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill would not, if passed, meet the terrible need of California today, which is growing worse day after day. The California Housing Initiative would supplement the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill. It goes on the ballot in November and the people in this state will have an opportunity to do what the people in New York, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, and other states have done—to vote a housing program for themselves. (*Applause.*)

Mr. Browne: Thank you. A gentleman in the first row there. You've been very smiling and eager.

Man: I have a question for Mr. Colling. You said, "This bill is a football for party prestige." May I ask which party you mean? (*Laughter.*)

Mr. Colling: Both parties.

Mr. Browne: Another question here. We have time, we have just

time for one little quick question. A quick one.

Man: This is addressed to Mr. Milton J. Brock. Won't the increased prices which you mentioned, incurred by the bill being passed, be still smaller than the penalty we will have to pay due the demoralization of millions lowering American standards?

Mr. Brock: I want to say that very briefly and very quickly. The bill if it ever becomes a law would amount to an addition to your cost in taxes of \$62 for every year for the next forty years. Now that doesn't seem like very much individually, but you add that up as to what it means to a man heading a family of four and that means about \$250 a family in increased taxes per year. Now, then—

Mr. Browne: Thank you, thank you. Do you want to close that up?

Mr. Brock: I'd like to. I'd like to say a lot!

Mr. Browne: We're a little in a hurry now. (*Laughter.*) I know the question wasn't answered, but we haven't any time, Mr. Post, we'll give you a chance now to make your summaries. While these gentlemen prepare their summaries, here is a special message of interest to all of you.

Announcer: Variety, they say, is the spice of life. If you follow the Town Meeting from week to week you'll notice a great deal of variety in our subjects. Tonight, for example, we've talked about the hou-

ing problem. Next week, as Lewis Browne will tell you in a moment, we will discuss the Berlin situation, and the following week, whether or not college football should be subsidized.

That indeed is a wide variety of topics. We rely upon our listeners for suggestions, and we hope you'll write and let us know what question you would like to hear on a future Town Meeting. At every broadcast, we distribute a question ballot, a list of ten possible subjects, and we invite the audience to vote on the most interesting topic. The results help us decide on forthcoming questions, so won't you let us hear from you? We want you to feel that this is your Town Meeting and if you can't be with us in person, we hope you will suggest a subject for future discussion. Of course, we always appreciate your comments on every program. Address your cards and letters to Town Hall, New York 18, New York. Now for the summaries of tonight's discussion, here is Mr. Lewis Browne.

Mr. Browne: First we'll hear from Mr. Brock for his side of the argument. Mr. Brock.

Mr. Brock: The Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill is filled with grave implications. Carelessness and lack of foresight can seriously endanger the liberties of all of our people. The philosophy of government ownership of housing might well be carried to the point where this same Government

would own and operate the Nation's farms, the cattle ranches, and the automobile factories—all of these, because here, too, is a need for more production.

The Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill does not, in fact it cannot, assume the responsibility of building more housing. It merely transfers the responsibility from those who are already building to the limit of materials and labor capacity to the Government, who, if fortunate, could only do as well and certainly not any better.

Private builders are building at a phenomenal rate and building homes that are within reach of every income bracket. Thus, there can be no valid reason for spending the taxpayer's billions and curtailing their liberties in the interests of government home ownership. That is what this bill proposes to do.

Mr. Browne: Thank you, Mr. Brock. Now, the summary for the other side, Mr. Post.

Mr. Post: Mr. Brock spent most of his time trying to scare us to death with the boogieman of socialism, bureaucracy, black markets, and an 80 million dollar a year subsidy. I don't mean to imply that this is not a large sum of money. But when this year we can spend some 35 million dollars to support the potato crop, I would think we might afford slightly more than twice that to get a building program. (*Applause.*)

He left us with the distinct impression that the home builders have the situation well in hand. He gave us no answer to the cries of the slum dwellers or the young veterans who cannot afford these home builders prices. And he dismissed our answer with a charge of socialism.

I believe that those who ignore these cries are a greater menace to our American system than those of us who seek answers within that system.

Mr. Colling said that federal money should be spent for such purposes as long as control remains within the cities themselves. Since this is exactly what the public housing provision of the bill does do, I think it is fair to assume that Mr. Colling's objections are confined to a small and, on the whole, not too important part. *(Applause.)*

Mr. Browne: Thank you, Lang-

don Post, Milton J. Brock, C. Haggerty, and Hal Colling your succinct analysis of tonight's question. Thanks again to KEO and our sponsor, the Sealy Mattress Company and its dealers.

Next week, your Town Meeting moves to Stockton, California, the northern end of the famous San Joaquin Valley. There, we will turn our attention to the question in everyone's mind, "What Shall We Do About the Berkeley Situation?"

Our speakers will be Miss Emma Mann, author, and war correspondent; Captain Harry Butcher, naval aide to General Eisenhower, and Denis W. Brogan, eminent British authority on European affairs. Your guest moderator will be Manchester Boddy, publisher of the *Los Angeles Daily News*. So plan to be with us next Tuesday at every Tuesday at the sound of the Crier's Bell.